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ABSTRACT

Two hundred randomly selected high school principals in Iowa participated in a survey to assess their perceptions of the role of the school media specialist. Principals were chosen as the target for the study because of their critical role in the functioning of the media center. The questionnaire instrument collected demographic data about the principals, along with their perceptions of the actual and ideal performance of the media specialist. Findings indicated that the respondents perceived a difference between the actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist. Generally, the principals felt that the school media specialist should participate more as a member of the educational team, be more involved with determining goals for the media program, and apply the principles of research more frequently to the media program. Recommendations are based on needs identified by the study: (1) professional media staffs need to openly recognize and seek to resolve gaps between actual and ideal conditions in their schools, (2) school principals should seek to improve communication within the school, (3) both the new and traditional functions of the school media specialist need to be clarified, and (4) curriculum planners for pre-service school media education should provide programs that recognize and address differences found between rural and urban schools, and large and small schools. A 42-item bibliography and a copy of the questionnaire are attached. (CMV)

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TITLE: PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF ACTUAL AND IDEAL ROLES OF THE SCHOOL MEDIA SPECIALIST

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PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF ACTUAL AND IDEAL ROLES OF THE SCHOOL MEDIA SPECIALIST

Introduction

School media centers have been undergoing changes in the last few years. One result of these changes is that school media centers have become the heart of the instructional program. The new functions performed by the school media specialist focus heavily on serving the needs of the professional staff and the needs of the learner. Because school media center activities are closely integrated with the educational program teachers, administrators and principals need to understand and support the center and the functions of the school media specialist. The most important non-media professional to the functioning of the media center is the principal. It is the principal's enthusiastic support, or lack of it, which often determines the success or failure of programs. If the principal supports the media specialists and their program the center has great potential. Without this interest and understanding, a significant media program is impossible.

Purpose of Study and Sample

Because the principal is a key force in the media center program, this study chose to describe the perceptions of the principal toward the role of the school media specialist. Two hundred high school principals in the state of Iowa were chosen to make up the sample. The randomized list of two hundred principals was obtained from the Iowa Department of Public Instruction.

This study focused on three general questions:

1) What perceptions do principals have toward the ideal roles and functions of the school media specialist?

2) What perceptions do principals have toward the actual performance of the school media specialist?

3) Is there a significant difference between the actual and ideal role of the school media specialist as perceived by secondary school principals?

In addition to studying the perceptions of principals as a whole, the principals were grouped according to the following variables and differences were studied:

1) Those who were employed in a small (enrollment of 500 or less) or large (enrollment of 501 or more) school.

2) Those who were employed in rural (population of 5,000 or less) or urban (population of 5,001 or more) geographical area.

3) Those who had a media course(s) or those who had not had a media course(s).

4) Those who had been employed in the school (tenure) for 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, or 16-more years.

The data collected was used to test the following hypotheses:

*1) There is no significant difference between the actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist as perceived by high school principals.

*2a) There is no significant difference between principals from small and large schools in their perceptions of what should be the actual role of the school media specialist.

2b) There is no significant difference between principals from small and large schools in their perceptions of what should be the ideal role of the school media specialist.

*2c) There is no significant difference between actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist as perceived by principals from small schools.

*2d) There is no significant difference between actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist as perceived by principals from large schools.

*3a) There is no significant difference between principals from rural and urban schools in their perceptions of what should be the actual role of the school media specialist.

3b) There is no significant difference between principals from rural and urban schools in their perceptions of what should be the ideal role of the school media specialist.

3c) There is no significant difference between actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist as perceived by principals from rural schools.

*3d) There is no significant difference between actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist as perceived by principals from urban schools.

4a) There is no significant difference between principals who had and had not taken a formal media course(s) in their perceptions of what should be the actual role of the school media specialist.

4b) There is no significant difference between principals who had and had not taken a formal media course(s) in their perceptions of what should be the ideal role of the school media specialist.

*4c) There is no significant difference between actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist as perceived by principals who had taken a media course.

*4d) There is no significant difference between actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist as perceived by principals who had not taken a media course.

*5a) There is no significant difference between principals with different tenure in their perceptions of what should be the actual role of the school media specialist.

5b) There is no significant difference between principals with different tenure in their perceptions of what should be the ideal role of the school media specialist.

*5c) There is no significant difference between actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist as perceived by principals with 0-5 years tenure.

*5d) There is no significant difference between actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist as perceived by principals with 6-10 years tenure.

*5e) There is no significant difference between actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist as perceived by principals with 11-15 years tenure.

Instrument Chosen for Data Collecting

The questionnaire was selected to be the type of instrument used for this study. The questionnaire was divided into two parts, each having its own purpose. The purpose of Part One was to obtain background

* Hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 level of significance.

information on the principal and the principal's school. This background information included conditions that may have affected the principal's perceptions toward the actual and ideal role of the school media specialist.

The purpose of Part Two was to determine the principal's perceptions of school media specialist's performance (both the actual and the ideal performance). Part Two was composed of statements describing functions that could be performed by a school media specialist. The principal read each statement and indicated: a) his/her perception of the actual performance by the school media specialist of the function stated, and b) his/her perception of the level of performance by the school media specialist that would be ideal for that function. The principal indicated his/her perceptions by giving each statement a numerical value. A 0-5 scale was used to measure the principal's perception in regard to each statement. The content of part two was based on the recommendations from the Certification and Standards Committee of the Iowa Educational Media Association. Thus, Part Two of the questionnaire contained forty-one functions statements. These forty-one statements were later (during the statistical analysis) grouped into eight subroles or categories: systems, administration, selection, utilization, production, leadership, research, and general.

Testing of Hypotheses

When the respondents returned the questionnaire, the responses were categorized according to their corresponding subrole. For example, each questionnaire was taken and the responses for statements 1, 17, 18, and 31 were recorded. These statements defined the subrole systems. These four scores were then averaged in order to produce one score for the subrole

"systems." Each questionnaire produced sixteen scores; there were eight subroles and two conditions (actual and ideal) under each subrole. The data was grouped according to this method so that perceptions of subroles instead of individual functions could be studied. The hypotheses were then tested by the paired t-test, t-test or analysis of variance. Significance was set at the 0.05 level.

Results

The test results allowed for the rejection of fourteen of the nineteen hypotheses. On the basis of the findings in this study, the following conclusions were made:

1) High school principals perceived a significant difference between the actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist. Significant differences were found in all eight subrole areas.
2) Each group of principals perceived a significant difference between the actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist. The two groups that were the most satisfied with the specialist's performance were: a) those principals employed in urban schools, and b) those principals employed eleven or more years in the school. The two groups that were least satisfied were: a) principals employed in small schools and b) principals employed in rural schools.
3) Principals from small and large schools perceived differently the actual performance of the school media specialist. Differences were found in all but one subrole-utilization. The two groups of principals perceived similarly the ideal performance of the school media specialist.

4) Principals from rural and urban schools received different scores in their perception of the actual role of the school media specialist. The significant differences between the two groups were found in the subroles: administration, selection, production, leadership, and general. In all significant cases, principals from urban schools produced the higher mean value. The two groups of principals did perceive similarly the ideal role of the school media specialist.

5) Principals who had taken a media course and principals who had not taken a media course did not differ on their perceptions of the actual role of their school media specialist. Neither did they differ on their perceptions of the ideal role of the school media specialist.

6) There was a significant difference between the perceptions of principals with different tenure toward the actual roles of the school media specialist. Principals employed 16 years or more produced a higher mean score than principals who have been employed 0 to 5 years. That is to say, principals employed 16 years or more perceived the media specialist performing the sub-roles more frequently than did principals employed 0-5 years.

Principal's Perceptions of Actual and Ideal Roles

A ranking of actual and ideal roles was produced from the principals sampled. On the actual level, the performance of the school media specialist in the various subrole categories ranged from performs infrequently (2.3) to performs sometimes (3.5) on a 5 point scale. Utilization and selection were the subroles being assumed most frequently; production and research

were the subroles perceived as being least assumed by the school media specialist.

At the ideal level, the desired performance ranged from performs sometimes (3.2) to performs always (4.2) for the different subroles. Selection and utilization were the subroles that should be assumed most frequently by the school media specialist. Research and production were the subroles that should be performed least by the school media specialist.

The subroles were ranked almost identically in both the actual and the ideal charts. Principals were saying that the order in which the subroles were being performed by the school media specialist was correct. The desire of the principals was that more time needed to be spent on the higher priority subroles. The only subrole that differed by more than one in the rank ordering was the subrole general (which contained more traditional functions). Principals indicated that the specialists need to concentrate more effort in the area of administration and systems.

Actual/Ideal as Perceived by all Principals

There is a difference between the actual and ideal performance of the school media specialist as perceived by principals. None of the subroles were reported as being performed at the ideal level. It is very common in any field not to have programs functioning at the ideal level. Realities such as high cost, poor physical facilities, lack of professional help, etc. may place a barrier between the actual and ideal performance levels. However, the value of the results of this study was in its showing the subroles that had the greatest difference between the two conditions. In other words, the difference between actual and ideal performance. The widest gap existed in the administration subrole. More

effort seems to be needed from the school media specialist in developing and implementing media programs. The two other subroles that needed the most improvement were systems and research. Generally the principals seem to desire that a school media specialist should: a) participate more as a member of the educational team; b) be more involved with determining goals for the media program; and c) apply the principals of research to the media program more frequently. Media specialists need to shift more of their efforts toward the learner.

It is this researcher's opinion that the gap between actual and ideal conditions under the subrole of research is due to the fact that research was not a part of, or not strongly emphasized in past media programs.

Conditions Effecting Actual and Ideal Perceptions

Do certain conditions effect the principal's perception toward the actual role and ideal role of the school media specialist? Considering perceived actual performance, differences between principals occurred for three of the four variables: a) population of the school, b) geographical location of the school, and c) tenure of the principal. The variable that produced the greatest difference between principals' actual perceptions was the size of the school. Seven out of eight subroles differed significantly (principals from large schools producing the higher score). It is assumed by this researcher that these results might have been due to different budgets, facilities, and the number equality of personnel working in large school media programs.

No significant differences for the ideal performance variable were produced for any of the four conditions or variables. Groups of principals did not differ in their desires of how the school media specialist should perform. This indicated that there was some unity within

the sample of principals. Discovering that principals desired similar performance of the school media specialist can be valuable in program planning, developing in-service, educating future specialists, locating subroles where perhaps perceptions need to be changed, etc.

Recommendations

The data produced by this study indicated definite needs that should be examined in order to strengthen school media programs. Following are several recommendations towards fulfilling these needs. First, professional media staffs need to openly recognize the gaps between actual and ideal conditions in their schools. These gaps should be clearly identified so they may be acted upon. The staff members then need to discover what conditions were causing the gaps. After the identification process is completed, the staff then needs to plan short and long term activities that will close the gaps.

The widest gaps discovered in this study occurred in the areas of administration in systems, and in research. Since the principals surveyed indicated a willingness for the school media specialist to assume greater responsibility in these areas, the school media specialist should reassess their current activities and prepare to provide more input with regard to these three subroles. Second, school principals should seek to improve communication within the school. The principal should attempt to encourage other staff members to become aware of the functions of the school media specialist and to use the services of this individual.

Third, there needs to be an identification of the "new" functions of the school media specialist and the "traditional" functions. Principals ranked the traditional subrole (general) slightly above three other subroles.

Colleges and universities that train professional educators should make an effort to inform prospective school personnel about the duties and responsibilities of the school media specialist in order to change the image of the traditional library services and to diminish the tendency to perpetuate the stereotyped role of the school media specialist (historically known as the librarian).

Fourth, there was a substantial difference between the perceptions of principals employed in larger schools (higher student enrollment) and principals employed in smaller schools. Also, a significant difference occurred between principals in rural areas and urban areas. Again, staff members must identify the reasons for the discrepancies between actual and ideal conditions and strive to improve conditions for rural and small populated schools. Perhaps through discussion, in-service education, pooling together outside resources, etc. some of the actual conditions can come closer to the ideal. Curriculum planners for pre-service school media education should provide programs that recognize and address such differences as those found between rural and urban schools; large and small schools.

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APPENDIX A: SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

STUDY OF ACTUAL AND IDEAL ROLES
OF SCHOOL MEDIA SPECIALISTS

The purpose of this questionnaire is to attempt to identify the ideal roles and functions along with the actual roles and functions of the school media specialist. In order to clarify the term 'school media specialist', the following definitions are provided:

School librarian- professional responsible for print materials that are housed in the school media center (library).

Audio-visual specialist- professional responsible for non-print materials and equipment that are housed in the school media center (library).

School media specialist- professional responsible for all of the materials (print, non-print, equipment) that are housed in the school media center (library).

****
Print: books, magazines, etc.
Non-print: films, slides, audio tapes, etc.
****

For purposes of this survey, a school media specialist may be considered:

a) one person responsible for all of the materials in the school media center.

b) a two person team: librarian plus audio-visual specialist.

If your school employs a two person team as described above, you will need to think of both persons when rating the statements in Part 2.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY BY:

1. Checking the correct answer for the questions asked in Part 1.
2. Indicating for each statement your perception of the actual condition in your school. (Part 2, left hand scale)
3. Indicating for each statement your judgment as to the ideal condition for that function. (Part 2, right hand scale)

Thank you!

PART 1

1. Check the grade levels you are responsible for as a secondary principal:

   ____ 7-12
   ____ 8-12
   ____ 9-12
   ____ Other

2. The total student population of your secondary school is:

   ____ Under-250
   ____ 251-500
   ____ 501-750
   ____ 751-1,000
   ____ 1,001-1,250
   ____ 1,251-over

3. The area in which your school is located can be considered:

   ____ Rural (population: under-5,000)
   ____ City (population: 5,001-50,000)
   ____ Urban (population: 50,001-over)

4. How would you describe your school media center?

____ Seperate: one person is responsible for the print media, the other person is responsible for non-print media and equipment.
____ Unified: one person is responsible for all media.

5. The main professional person(s) in charge of the school media center is: (NOTE: see definitions on first page)

____ School librarian(s)
____ Audio-visual specialist(s)
____ School media specialist(s)

6. Have you ever taken a formal media course at a college or university?

____ Yes
____ No

**** In answering questions 7-9, count each staff member only once. ****

7a. The number of school librarians your school employs is:

____0
____1
____2
____Other

7b. The total work hours per week for all of the librarians are:

____Under-20 hrs.
____21-39 hrs.
____40-45 hrs.
____46-59 hrs.
____60-79 hrs.
____80-over hrs.

8a. The number of audio-visual specialists your school employs is:

____0
____1
____2
____Other

8b. The total work hours per week for all of the audio-visual specialists are:

____Under-20 hrs.
____21-39 hrs.
____40-45 hrs.
____46-59 hrs.
____60-79 hrs.
____80-over hrs.

9a. The number of school media specialists your school employs is:

____0
____1
____2
____Other

9b. The total work hours per week for all of the school media specialists are:

____Under-20 hrs.
____21-39 hrs.
____40-45 hrs.
____46-59 hrs.
____60-79 hrs.
____80-over hrs.

10. The number of years that you have been employed as a secondary school principal at your school is:

____1-5 yrs.
____6-10 yrs.
____11-15 yrs.
____16-over yrs.

ACTUAL PERFORMANCE							IDEAL PERFORMANCE					
DON'T KNOW	NEVER PERFORMS	PERFORMS INFREQUENTLY	PERFORMS SOMETIMES	PERFORMS FREQUENTLY	PERFORMS ALWAYS		DON'T KNOW	NEVER PERFORMS	PERFORMS INFREQUENTLY	PERFORMS SOMETIMES	PERFORMS FREQUENTLY	PERFORMS ALWAYS
0	1	2	3	4	5	22. Participates in the planning, arrangement, and utilization and development of media facilities which will support the objectives of the media program and the instructional program.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	23. Operates production equipment.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	24. Evaluates and selects production equipment and supplies.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	25. Assists teachers and students in identifying, obtaining, and adapting media to meet their needs.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	26. Provides guidance in reading, listening, and viewing experiences for students and teachers.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	27. Keeps school media center quiet.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	28. Keeps an adequate equipment inventory.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	29. Retrieves, interprets, and evaluates available research related to the educational program.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	30. Provides and protects the right of access to information by faculty and students within the existing legal framework.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	31. Determines goals for the media program as an integral part of the educational program of the school and district.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	32. Establishes procedures for effective and efficient acquisition, processing, cataloging, circulation, distribution, and maintainance of materials.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	33. Establishes job specifications and applies principles of personnel management.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	34. Develops and applies criteria for evaluating and selecting a variety of materials and equipment.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	35. Establishes and administers processes and procedures for preview, evaluation, selection, and withdrawal of materials and equipment.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	36. Instructs and supervises others in media design and production.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	37. Designs and adapts an identified research study for the development and advancement of the media program.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	38. Delivers needed equipment to the classrooms.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	39. Teaches skills in the retrieval and utilization of materials and equipment to students and teachers.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	40. Designs production facilities and establishes basic routines for the operation of those facilities.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	41. Designs, develops, and writes, proposals for the acquisition of local, state, and federal funds to support and expand media programs.	0	1	2	3	4	5

In order to identify those surveys that have been returned, PLEASE sign:

YOUR NAME: _____

THANK YOU!

YOUR SCHOOL: _____

PART 2

Please circle the number which best represents your perception of the actual and ideal performance of the media specialist for each of the statements:

ACTUAL PERFORMANCE							IDEAL PERFORMANCE						
DON'T KNOW	NEVER PERFORMS	PERFORMS INFREQUENTLY	PERFORMS SOMETIMES	PERFORMS FREQUENTLY	PERFORMS ALWAYS		DON'T KNOW	NEVER PERFORMS	PERFORMS INFREQUENTLY	PERFORMS SOMETIMES	PERFORMS FREQUENTLY	PERFORMS ALWAYS
0	1	2	3	4	5	1. Participates, as a member of the educational team, in the design and continual development of the curriculum.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	2. Sets up and operates equipment.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	3. Conducts in-service media training for teachers.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	4. Initiates, develops, implements, and evaluates policies for the operation of the media program.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	5. Prepares, justifies, and administers the media program budget.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	6. Builds a collection of bibliographic aids and tools and other sources to provide current reviews and information about materials and equipment.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	7. Develops selection policies which meet curricular, informational, and recreational needs and conforms to the appropriate legal requirements.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	8. Produces media for specified learning objectives.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	9. Teaches skills in the retrieval and utilization of materials and equipment to students and teachers.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	10. Repairs malfunctioning equipment.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	11. Reproduces printed material.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	12. Applies the principles of research to the development and advancement of the media program.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	13. Engages in research and publication activities.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	14. Participates in district, county, regional, state, and national organizations.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	15. Checks shelves frequently to keep materials in order.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	16. Determines classification system to be used for organizing materials.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	17. Analyzes learner characteristics, such as various abilities, interests, needs, and learning styles.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	18. Recommends alternative learning environments.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	19. Maintains an effective public relations program which communicates the vital contribution of the media program to learning.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	20. Assesses the current status of the media program in terms of district, state, regional, and national guidelines and to establish short and long range plans.	0	1	2	3	4	5
0	1	2	3	4	5	21. Identifies and interprets legislation which affects the media program.	0	1	2	3	4	5
							0	1	2	3	4	5